

Wyoming Game and Fish Department Hunter Education Newsletter



Coordinator's Comments

What a difference.....makes.

What a difference a couple of weeks makes.

Two weeks ago while stressing to get caught up on upcoming HE workshops the front counter staff notified me a hunter education (HE) instructor was here to see me. As I walked to the front, I was surprised to see Rafael Serrano in the Casper office. Rafael, a very active HE instructor from the Green River region, was recently transferred to Casper for work and was looking to schedule some much needed spring HE classes in Casper. Green River's loss but Casper's gain, I thought.

What a difference a big smile and contagious enthusiasm make.

Rafael was visiting with the office staff with this usual big grin and saw me coming down the hall. He ran up and gave me a big hug, bubbling with excitement for continuing to teach HE, now in a new community. The big heart and joy of doing HE, which Rafael brought, brightened my day as he brightened the days all who he spoke HE with.



Rafael Serrano working with Hunter Education Students in the Green River Region.

What a difference a single phone call makes.

While on a late season cow elk hunt, I got a call from Lucy Diggins-Wold from Green River. Lucy advised me that Rafael was involved in a hunting incident and was killed while coyote hunting. The news of this terrible hunting incident hit all that knew Rafael very hard, most of us our still trying to understand this tremendous tragedy. Lucy mentored Rafael and understood how much he cared for teaching others about hunting. The photo by Lucy depicts how Rafael poured himself into HE classes.

What a difference a letter from a son makes.

At the Rafael Serrano memorial services, on a grey day in Rock Springs, the large gathering listened to kind words about Rafael. When a letter from his 13 year old son was read the somber crowd had a chance for shared laughter. The letter spoke of a father-son coyote hunting team called "No Results." Rafael clearly understood the measure of a hunt was not dependent upon the bagging of critters but the quality of time spent with family and friends. His eldest son, Christian, clearly learned this lesson from his dad and HE instructor, a lesson which Rafael instilled in many taking one of his HE classes.

What a difference the sight of the American flag and the sound of a distant trumpet make.

Rafael was a veteran, serving in both Kuwait and Iraq, and his military service is much appreciated by all those who knew his tremendous sense of duty. When the flag was ceremoniously handed to his wife, taps sounded, the gun salute was finished, and not a dry eye was to be found in the church, for we all realized what we had lost when Rafael died.

What a difference the loss of one good man makes.

Rafael Serrano will be greatly missed by all who knew him. I thank his family for sharing him with the HE cadre for the last few years as a HE instructor. We hope and pray his four children 13, 11, 4, and 1 year old will always remember the man of distinction, Rafael Serrano, who chose to share his passion for hunting in HE classes.

"Conserving Wildlife—Serving People"

A Sense of Place

As HE instructors, we all experience the desire to share what we love with our friends and family. Sometimes our family does not have the same passion or zeal for hunting as we do. A little nurturing may bring back into the field those close to us that have taken some time away from hunting. Ray Fischer, a long-time instructor, penned this story about bringing back an important family member and a great lady to the ranks of those who call themselves hunters and not just people who hunt.

Gentlemen,

After a 25yr hiatus my bride has decided to resume her role as a hunter and I cannot tell you how happy I am with the decision. While she has no desire to stomp through the fields after upland birds, she is deer hunting this winter and is anxious for spring turkey season to roll around. I like to think her decision to return to the hunter's fire is to spend more time with me, but I realize that's likely not the reason.

Whatever the reason, I'm happy. Which leads me to her 'kill' last evening. We spotted a herd of 12-14 deer heading across a pasture towards a wheat field for evening feeding. Since I knew where they were headed we decided to put the 'sneak' on them and be there when they arrived. We slogged through 1/2 mile of muddy stubble and up a cedar lined waterway to the ambush point. The last few yards were made belly crawling through the tall grass around cedar trees to get to the lip of the waterway.

Yes, you read correctly, my wife was crawling through the wet grass. The deer were heading our way and she waited diligently for her shot. A nice bodied buck turned broadside at 85yds and she picked her spot, flicked the safety off, and sent a round on its way. The buck turned his head as the bullet bounced through the trees behind and to its side, then the entire herd left the area. Jamie was aghast and deeply disappointed that she'd missed, but was more irate that I was laughing at her. It's not that she'd missed the easy shot, it's the way she missed it. She was shooting across a fence about 10-15 ft out from her position and had managed to sever a wire which naturally caused said bullet to greatly alter its path.

After explaining that she couldn't do that again in a thousand shots she calmed down a little and realized that it just wasn't the deer's day to die. Her demeanor was back to normal after we slogged back to the truck and made our way home. One of those unexplainable hunting occurrences that she'll remember forever, great tale to tell. Although she 'killed' a fence yesterday, her spirits are high and she's rarin' to go again this evening and I have no doubt that she'll have venison in the freezer by the weekend.

I'll send pictures when her deer is taken.—Ray Fischer

HE Recruitment and Retention

A very important hunter recruitment and retention endeavor on the national level is the Youth Hunter Education Challenge (YHEC). YHEC is a great way for youth who have taken a HE class, to bring learned skills to a fun venue and compete in a friendly event while becoming eligible to attend International YHEC.

Wyoming YHEC for many years was conducted as a part of Expo but with the help of Rick Rothleuthner of the Upton Gun Club and the Friends of the NRA, the Wyoming YHEC is a stand-alone activity. Each year in May or June Wyoming YHEC is conducted at the Upton Gun Club and is open to youths from Wyoming and South Dakota. This fun event is manned by many volunteers and under Rick's direction continues to grow in numbers and in fun. Rick's work with hunter recruitment and YHEC earned him the WGFD Conservation Steward of the Year Award for 2011.

With many HE classes starting early in the year, I am asking all HE instructors to encourage their HE students to check out the new WGFD web site or call the HE office to learn more about YHEC 2012.



Trevor Ruff took the time to share this whitetail via Facebook, which he had harvested this year. I taught Trevor HE many years ago and was delighted he was willing to share his photo with the HE cadre. These correspondences with former students remind me that a HE class does provide a good foundation advancing people who hunt to become hunter/sportsmen.

Tools of the Trade

While stopping in for a HE class visitation to Pete and Tammy Tarver, I watched Tammy talk about the safety of hunting compared to high school sports. This discussion was very reassuring for the parents in the group and I wanted to share the latest news release from NSSF (plus a couple others of relevance) so others may use the most accurate information in their HE classes.

Dec 2011- NSSF news release

"Hunting with firearms is safe; in fact, hunting with firearms is one of the safest recreational activities in America."

With hunting season in full swing across the country, the National Shooting Sports Foundation, the trade association for the firearms industry, has compiled data that shows hunting ranks third in safety when compared to 28 other recreational pursuits, ranging from baseball to wrestling. Hunting with firearms has an injury rate of 0.05 percent, which equates to about 1 injury per 2,000 participants, a safety level bettered only by camping (.01 percent) and billiards (.02 percent). For comparison, golf has an injury rate of 0.16 percent (1 injury per 622 participants), while tackle football topped the list of activities with an injury rate of 5.27 percent (1 injury per 19 participants).

"Many people have the misconception that hunting is unsafe, but the data tells a different story," said Jim Curcuruto, NSSF's director of industry research and analysis. "Comprehensive hunter education classes that emphasize the basic rules of firearm safety and a culture of hunters helping fellow hunters practice safe firearms handling in the field are responsible for this good record."

To put hunting's safety standing into perspective, compared to hunting a person is . . .

- 11 times more likely to be injured playing volleyball
- 19 times more likely to be injured snowboarding
- 25 times more likely to be injured cheerleading or bicycle riding
- 34 times more likely to be injured playing soccer or skateboarding
- 105 more times likely to be injured playing tackle football.

The number of hunters who went afield last year is estimated at 16.3 million. Of that total, approximately 8,122 sustained injuries, or 50 per 100,000 participants. The vast majority of hunting accidents--more than 6,600--were tree stand-related.

The injury data NSSF used to compile this hunter-safety report comes from the National Electronic Injury Surveillance System of the Consumer Products Safety Commission 2010 and the International Hunter Education Association's Hunter Incident Clearinghouse.



Firearms handling is required in every HE class but live rounds should never be found in the classroom.

NEWS RELEASE IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME December 2011 - Mark Gamblin

Weapon Accidentally Discharged in Hunter Ed Class A 9 mm handgun was accidentally discharged during a hunter education class in Soda Springs the evening of December 12. No one was injured. Idaho Department of Fish and Game prohibits a hunter education instructor from bringing live ammunition into a hunter education classroom. Fish and Game asked the Soda Springs Police Department to investigate the incident. According to the police report, the volunteer hunter education instructor brought the handgun and the ammunition to the class for a demonstration. After the demonstration, one of the students, unaware it was loaded, discharged the weapon. The shot hit a mounted mule deer head. The instructor has been dismissed. Fish and Game will make counseling available to anyone in the class who wants it.

Bear Awareness—Another reason why we teach it!



Bullet goes through grizzly and kills hunter on Montana-Idaho border LIBBY, Mont. (AP)

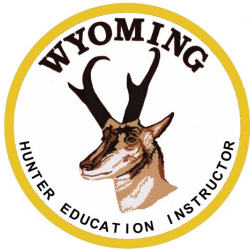
Officials in northwestern Montana say a shot fired at a grizzly bear as it attacked a Nevada hunter

passed through the bear before striking and killing the hunter.

The Western News reports tests requested by the Department of the Interior found grizzly bear DNA on the .30-06 bullet that killed 39-year-old Steve Stevenson of Winnemucca, Nev., on Sept. 16.

Stevenson and 20-year-old Ty Bell were hunting near the Montana-Idaho border when Bell shot what he thought was a black bear. The men tracked the bear into heavy cover, where the 400-pound animal attacked Stevenson. Bell fired several shots trying to kill the bear.

Lincoln County Sheriff Roby Bowe called the shooting a "horribly tragic accident." He says he doesn't expect charges will be filed, but that decision is up to the county attorney.



Check the newly updated WGFD website
for all sorts of wildlife and Hunter
Education information
<http://gf.state.wy.us/>

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*As Hunter Education Volunteer Instructors you
are a voice for the Department's mission:
"Conserving Wildlife — Serving People"*

*The Department's message that we as HE
instructors teach has been established by the
Game and Fish Commission and includes six
major topics:*

1. *Hunter Responsibility and Ethics*
2. *Wildlife Conservation and Management*
3. *Firearms and Firearm Safety*
4. *Game & Fish Statutes and Regulations*
5. *Game Care & Wildlife Identification*
6. *Outdoor Safety*

Dates to Remember

- 2012 New HE Instructor Academy June 22-24 at the WGFD Whiskey Mtn. Conservation Camp
- 2012 HE Instructor in-service regional remaining workshops:
Laramie region - March 31st in Cheyenne
Pinedale region - May 5th in Pinedale
- 2012 YHEC - June 9th at the Upton Gun Club
- 2012 IHEA Conference May 29th - June 2nd in Kansas City, MO
- 2012 Wyoming Hunting and Fishing Heritage Expo Sept 13-15th in Casper - 15th Anniversary

Regional and Statewide HE

Hunter Education Advisory Committee Changes

As the Wyoming Game and Fish Department's Hunter Education Program moves forward to better serve the people of Wyoming in providing the first lessons needed to become a safe, legal, and ethical hunter, changes are often addressed to better meet public demands. These changes, which influence day-to-day practices, are often made after consulting with those with much experience who share the understanding of teaching HE and the passion for training new hunters while maintaining strict compliance to both state statute and WGF Commission Regulations.

The HE Advisory Committee has comprised one representative from each of the eight WGFD regions, the Regional Information and Education Specialist, and the Conservation Education Section staff. Expectations for HE Advisory Committee members are to provide insights and advice to the HE Coordinator when programmatic changes are needed to improve the HE program. All advisory board committee members are appointed by the HE coordinator and will serve on a two-year term.

Topics for this group will include: Statutory changes to HE, Instructor Policy Manual Update, getting HE back in the schools, Traditional Course Test review and revisions, Internet Based HE Test review and revisions, classroom material (videos, written hand outs, training aids, equipment needs) review and revisions, incentive awards other than those specified in the instructor manual, instructor workshops, academy training topics, and other practices to ensure an accurate, consistent, and credible message is communicated statewide.

- **Jackson Region - Alan Brumsted & Mark Gocke**
- **Casper Region - Wayne Erickson & Robin Kepple**
- **Pinedale Region - Jim Johnson & Ray Bredehoft**
- **Cody Region - Jim Lash & Tara Teaschner**
- **Laramie Region - Pat Mc Eachron & Al Langston**
- **Sheridan Region - Scott Wodahl & Warren Mischke**
- **Green River Region - Gary Wolfe & Lucy Diggins-Wold**
- **Lander Region - Bruce Campbell & Jason Hunter**
- **Conservation Education Section - Margaret James, Tasha Sorenson, & Tristanna Bickford**